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21 November 1966

Dear Dr. Flax:

During the past year I have been impressed by the efforts of your staff to increase the effectiveness of photographic satellite reconnaissance missions in their coverage of targets essential to the fulfillment of the requirements of the intelligence community. I have also been pleased with the close collaboration of your staff with the COMOR Photo Working Group in your efforts to achieve this improved effectiveness. During this same time period you have operated the satellite reconnaissance system at a very high rate of reliability and have introduced new features such as the new programmer in the CORONA vehicle which have added even more to your ability to satisfy the intelligence community's requirements.

As you know, COMOR has reviewed in detail the results achieved by the satellite reconnaissance program in recent months and has found that in general you have overfulfilled our requirements. At the same time, our analysis demonstrated that it would be desirable for COMOR to review the existing requirements and to make them somewhat more realistic in certain respects.

Under general guidance from the Director of Central Intelligence that he wished the reconnaissance effort to be conducted at the minimum level consistent with the essential security of the United States, COMOR has been engaged in reviewing requirements for reconnaissance. The first step approved by USIB on 8 November 1966 was to restate the requirements for search in the Soviet bloc and Communist China. The second effort, launched by COMOR several weeks ago, is to review and revise so-called Tab A which lists the numbers and frequency of coverage of targets for surveillance purposes. It seems clear that in the circumstance of the present high effectiveness of the satellite reconnaissance program and the guidance from the DCI, our requirements can be satisfied with a considerably reduced launch program. The specific number of missions required will be influenced to some degree by the

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Dr. Alexander H. Flax
Assistant Secretary of the Air Force
for Research and Development

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remainder of the work to be done by COMOR in reviewing its surveillance requirements and in assessing the effects of the new programmer in acquiring search photography by the CORONA system.

In the meantime, however, pending completion of these tasks, I have been directed to inform you that you should use for planning purposes a level of seven successful search [redacted]

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missions per year to satisfy our requirements. You of course will have to plan launches on the basis of your assessment of expected reliability, but on the basis of reliability figures used by your staff in discussion and correspondence with COMOR, I assume that this requirement level would result in a total launch program of approximately [redacted] for the 18 months of calendar year 1967 and the first half of 1968.

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I am looking forward to your continued support in the COMOR study of these matters and will keep your staff advised of its progress. I will advise you immediately if our assessment should indicate a further change in the level of successful missions required.

[redacted]
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Chairman

Committee on Overhead Reconnaissance

- 1 Dr. Flax
- 2 Mr. Reber
- 3 DCI
- 4 DDCI
- 5 D/NIPE
- 6 DDS&T
- 7 DDI
- 8 NPIC
- 9 D/Recce
- 10-12 SA(COMOR)/DDS&T

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